Amarnath Cave Temple, Jammu and Kashmir

Ref: AI Overview

The Amarnath Temple is a renowned Hindu shrine located in the Jammu and Kashmir Himalayas at 3,888 meters (12,756 ft) altitude, dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is famous for a natural ice stalagmite, the Shivalinga, which waxes and wanes with the moon, reaching its peak size in summer. The holy cave is accessible to pilgrims annually between July and August.

Key Details of Amarnath Temple

- **Location:** Situated in the Anantnag district, roughly 141 km from Srinagar, often reached through Pahalgam or Baltal.
- **Significance:** Believed to be the place where Lord Shiva revealed the secret of immortality (Amar Katha) to Goddess Parvati.
- **The Ice Lingam:** Inside the cave, a large ice pillar forms along with two smaller formations, believed to represent Parvati and Ganesha.
- **The Yatra (Pilgrimage):** The pilgrimage occurs during the Hindu month of Shraavana (July–August), lasting about 45 days. The Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) manages the Yatra.

Yatra Routes and Access

- **Pahalgam Route:** The traditional, longer route, taking about 3-5 days one way.
- **Baltal Route:** A shorter (14 km) but steeper route, allowing the trip to be completed in 1-2 days.
- **Helicopter:** Available from Srinagar to Baltal/Panchtarni, followed by a 6 km trek.

Important Tips

- **Registration:** Mandatory to register with the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board to participate in the Yatra.
- **Conditions:** The trek is challenging, involving high altitude, steep terrain, and volatile weather.

The cave is believed to have been discovered in the 19th century by a shepherd, though it is mentioned in ancient texts, and the annual pilgrimage is a major, highly revered event in India

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Ref: Wikipedia

Amarnath Temple is a Hindu shrine located in the Pahalgam tehsil of Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is a cave situated at an altitude of 3,888 m (12,756 ft),[1] about 168 km from Anantnag city, the district headquarters, 141 km (88 mi) from Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, reached through either Sonamarg or Pahalgam. It is an important shrine in Hinduism.[2][3]

The cave, located in Sind Valley, is surrounded by glaciers, snowy mountains and is covered with snow most of the year, except for a short period in the summer, when it is open to pilgrims. In 1989, pilgrims numbered between 12,000 and 30,000. In 2011, the numbers reached a peak, crossing 6.3 lakh (630,000) pilgrims. In 2018 pilgrims numbered 2.85 lakh (285,000). The annual pilgrimage varies between 20 and 60 days.

The Amarnath cave, abode of the *Mahamaya Shakti Pitha*, is one of the 51 Shakti Pithas, the temples of the Indian subcontinent that commemorate the location of the fallen body parts of the Hindu deity Sati.[4]

Shiva Linga

The Shiva Lingam at the shrine is a Swayambhu lingam. The lingam is a natural stalagmite formation inside a 40 m (130 ft) tall cave at an elevation of 3,888 m (12,756 ft) on the Amarnath Mountain, which has a peak of 5,186 metres (17,014 ft). The stalagmite is formed due to the freezing of water drops that fall from the roof of the cave onto the floor, resulting in an upward growth of an ice formation. Here, the stalagmites considered as the lingam, a physical manifestation of Shiva, form a solid-dome-shape. Two smaller stalagmites are thought to represent Parvati and Ganesha.[5]

According to the ancient Hindu texts of the Mahabharata and Puranas a lingam represents Shiva.[6] The lingam waxes during May to August, as snow melts in the Himalayas above the cave, and water seeps into the rocks of the cave; thereafter, the lingam gradually wanes.[1][*unreliable source?*] Religious beliefs hold that the lingam grows and shrinks with the phases of the moon, reaching its height during the summer festival.[7][*unreliable source?*] Hindus believe this is the place where Shiva explained the secret of life and eternity to his divine consort, Parvati.

Lidder Valley, where the cave is located, has a number of glaciers.[10] In 2009, glaciologist M. N. Koul, the former head of the geography department at the University of Jammu, has said that while more scientific studies are needed, contributors to change in lingam size could include changes in the water's pathways to the lingam.[10] The cave is made of limestone and gypsum.[11] Heat generated by tourists affects the size of the stalagmite.[11] Outside temperature changes also affect their size.[12][13] To minimize artificially induced temperature changes, helicopter trips and helipad sites are regulated.[10] There has been talk of artificially extending the life of the stalagmites; this was met with objections.[10][11]

History

Ancient history

The cave temple and pilgrimage are mentioned in several ancient Sanskrit texts, including the c. 6th–7th century Nilamata Purana and the 12th century chronicle Rajatarangini of Kalhana, which refer to them as *Amareshvara* and *Amareshvara yatra*. The Rajatarangini also mentions the Sheshnag Lake, which it describes as falling on the yatra route.[14] It is believed that in the 11th century CE, Queen Suryamati gifted trishulas, banalingas and other sacred emblems to this temple.[15] *Rajavalipataka*, begun by Prajna Bhatta, contains detailed references to the pilgrimage to Amarnath Cave Temple. In addition, there are further references to this pilgrimage in many other ancient texts.

Medieval history

The cave and the Shivling find mention in Abu'l Fazl's 16th century work *Ain-i-Akbari*. According to him, the site attracted many pilgrims. He describes the waxing and waning of the lingam according to the seasons and the moon.[16][17]

> Between *Great Tibet* [i.e. Ladakh] and the above-mentioned parganah [*Dachchhinpārah*, in the Lidder Valley] is a cave in which is an image in ice called *Amar Nāt*. ... They believe it to be the image of *Mahādeva* and regard it as a means (through supplication) of the fulment of their desires. ... The snows of this mountainous tract nowhere melt, and from the extreme cold, the straitness of the defiles and the rough inequalities of the road, they are surmounted with great toil.
>
> —Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (c. 16th century)[18]

François Bernier, a French physician, accompanied Emperor Aurangzeb during his visit to Kashmir in 1663. In his book *Travels in Mughal Empire*, he provides an account of the places he visited, noting that he was "pursuing journey to a grotto full of wonderful congelations, two days journey from Sangsafed" when he "received intelligence that my Nawab felt very impatient and uneasy on account of my long absence." The "grotto" referenced in this passage is the Amarnath cave — as the editor of the second edition of the English translation of the book, Vincent A. Smith, makes clear in his introduction. He writes: "The grotto full of wonderful congelations is the Amarnath cave, where blocks of ice, stalagmites formed by dripping water from the roof are worshipped by many Hindus who resort here as images of Shiva...."[19]

Modern history

In 1895, pilgrims would first travel to Kheer Bhawani for a brief stop.[20] Sustained by free rations from the state, the pilgrims would then travel to Srinagar.[20] From Srinagar, in batches, the pilgrims would then head up Lidder Valley, stopping at locations for holy dips.[20] At Mach Bawan, local Hindus would join them. Maliks of Batkoot were responsible for the route during these years.[20] Sister Nivedita, in *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*, writes of Swami Vivekananda's visit to the cave in 1898.[21]

Legends

According to legend, Sage Bhrigu was the first to discover Amarnath. A long time ago, it is believed that the Valley of Kashmir was underwater, and Sage Kashyapa drained it through a series of rivers and rivulets. As a result, when the waters drained, Bhrigu was the first to have darshan of Shiva at Amarnath. Thereafter, when people heard of the lingam, it became an abode of Shiva for all believers and the site of an annual pilgrimage, traditionally performed by lakhs of people in July and August during the Hindu holy month of Savan.[22]

It is believed that Shiva left Nandi, the bull, at Pahalgam (Bail Gaon). At Chandanwari, he released the Moon from his hair (Jata). On the banks of Lake Sheshnag, he released his snake. At Mahagunas Parvat (Mahaganesh Mountain), he left his son Ganesha. At Panjtarni, Shiva left behind the five elements – Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Sky. As a symbol of sacrificing the earthly world, Shiva performed the Tandava Dance. Then, finally, Shiva entered the Amarnath Cave along with Parvati and both of them manifested into a lingam made of ice. Shiva became the lingam of ice and Parvati became the yoni of rock.[23]

Yatra (pilgrimage) details and routes

Pilgrimage opening timeframe: July–August during ice lingam formation

Pilgrims visit the holy site during the 45-day season around the festival of Shravani Mela in July–August, coinciding with the Hindu holy month of Shraavana.[24] The *Amarnath Yatra* pilgrimage occurs when the iced stalagmite Shiva lingam reaches the apex of its waxing phase through the summer months.[25] The period of July–August is a popular time for the pilgrimage.[26][27][28] The beginning of the annual pilgrimage is marked by *pratham pujan* (transl. first prayer).[29][30]

The time frame, during which the pilgrimage remains open, depends on the formation of iced lingam. For example, in 1995 the pilgrimage remained open for 20 days. From 2004 to 2009, it remained open for 60 days. During the following years, it remained open for between 40 and 60 days.[31] In 2019, the Yatra remained open for 46 days from 1 July to 15 August.[32]

State quotas and mandatory pilgrim pre-registration & e-tracking

Pilgrims have to pre-register months in advance and are allotted quotas according to state. States comprising a majority of the allotment include Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.[33] To ensure the health and safety of the pilgrims, such as during a disaster or medical emergency, each pilgrim and vehicle is given a unique wearable traceable identification tag which are scanned at the several designated places along the pilgrim route.[34] Since 2019, pilgrims are given identification cards for the duration of the pilgrimage which are scanned at several locations for tracing the pilgrims.[34] Similarly, the vehicles are also tracked via the tags, so that the entire pilgrimage can be traced.[34][35]

Transport and roads

Nearest airport is Srinagar International Airport. Nearest railway stations are on the Jammu-Baramulla line - Srinagar railway station for the north pilgrim route through Baltal and Anantnag railway station for the south route via Pahalgam-Chandanwari. The State Road Transport Corporation and private transport operators provide the regular services

from Jammu to Pahalgam and Baltal. Also privately hired taxis are available from Jammu, Anantnag, Pahalgam, Srinagar, etc.

On the south route via Pahalgam-Chandanwari, the helicopter services from Chandanwari base camp to Panjtarni (6 km from the cave) are also available from various private operators.[36]

Chandanwari-Sangam Highway as part of NH501, including 11 km long *Khanabal-Baltal Tunnel* (Sheshnag Tunnel) under the Mahaganus Top (Ganesh Top), is the 22 km long greenfield section of the national highway on the South Route which will connect the South and North yatra routes via the highway tunnel. In January 2023, MoRTH's NHIDCL invited RFP submissions by vendors by 20 February 2023 for preparation of DPR (detailed project report) which will take 10 months to prepare, subsequently after 2 months long pre-construction preparation the construction will take 5 years, with the target completion date of 31 March 2029 (total 6 years).[37]

Two main routes

Devotees travel on two main routes which are partially motorable and partially foot-track near to the holy cave: the shorter but steeper 13 km northern route from Baltal Basecamp, and the longer but easier and busier 43 km Pahalgam-Chandanwari basecamp route.[36]

South route – 43 km: Pahalgam-Chandanwari route

It begins with a 43 kilometres (27 mi) mountainous trek from the Nunwan and Chandanwari basecamp at Pahalgam and reaches the cave-shrine after night halts at Sheshnag Lake and Panchtarni camps.[38] The journey from Pahalgam takes about five days.[36] It runs from Pahalgam (on Jammu-Srinagar NH) to Chandanwari Basecamp (9,500 ft) – 16 km, Pissu Top – 3 km, Zoji Bal-Naga Koti-Sheshnag (11,730 ft) – 9 km, Waribal-Mahaguns Yop (Ganesh Top, 14,500 ft) – 4.6 km, Rabibal-Panchtarni (22,729 ft)-Sangam (T-section for North route via Baltal) – 6 km, Amarnath cave – 3 km. The whole foot track route takes three to five days one way.

The route is motorable up to Chandanwari, which will become motorable up to Sangam after construction of *NH501 Chandanwari-Baltal Highway* which includes *Khanabal-Baltal Tunnel* (Sheshnag Tunnel) under the *Mahaganus Top* (Ganesh Top), see "Transport" section above.[37] Once completed, all the route will become motorable except the last 3 km from Sangam to Amarnath cave.

North route – 13 km: Baltal route and ropeway

See also: Ropeways in India

It runs from Baltal basecamp to Domail – 2 km, Barari – 5 km, Sangam (T-section for South route via Pahalgam-Chandanwari) – 4 km, Amarnath cave - 3 km. This track is motorable till Baltal and Baltal-Amarnath foot track takes one to two days return trip. Once the NH501 from Pahalgam-Chandanwari to Baltal is completed, including Sheshnag-Sangam tunnel under the Mahaguns Top (Ganesh Top), this route will become motorable except the last 3 km from Sangam to Amarnath cave. This shorter route is just about 14 km long, but has a very steep gradient and is quite difficult to climb. The route is along the Amarnath valley and

all along the route one can see the Amaravati river (a tributary of Chenab) which originates from the Amarnath Glacier.

Amarnath ropeway, 11.60 km long ropeway planned from Baltal to Amarnath Temple, tender for DPR were issued by March 2025.[39]

Ancient route: Awantipur-Pissu Top-Sheshnag-Panchtarni

Bhrigu's *Amarnath Mahatmya* identifies a number of locations on the pilgrimage route to the Amarnath cave: Shurahyar, Shivpora, Pandrethan, Pampore, Javati, Awantipur, Barsu, Jaubror, Belihar, Wagahama, Chakreshwar (Tsakdar), Hari Chandar, Sthalwat (Thajwor), Suryai Gohwat (Sriguphvara), Lambodari, Sirham, Bodrus, Bala Khelyan, Ganish, Mammaleshwar, Bhrigupati Kshetra, Nila Ganga, Pissu Hill (Pissu Top), Sheshnag, Wavjan, Panchtarni, Amravati.[40] On the return journey Mamleshwar and Naudal are crossed.[41] Following the construction of drivable road, alignment of this pilgrimage route has presently changed at some places (which has now become "South route" - see above).[41]

Organisation and facilities

Officially, the Yatra is organised by the government in collaboration with the *Shree Amarnath Shrine Board* (SASB). Various agencies provide necessary facilities all along the route during the Yatra period, which includes provision of ponies, supply of power, telecommunication facilities, firewood and setting up of fair price shops.[36]

En route to the cave, various non-governmental organisations have set up food supply and resting tents called *pandals* which are available for free to the pilgrims. Near the shrine, hundreds of tents which are erected by locals can be hired for a night's stay.[36]

Srinagar Pilgrimage Centre, with capacity to host 3000 *yatris*, facilitates pilgrims' stay who are travelling for the holy pilgrimage. The state government began its construction in May 2022.[24]

Security of pilgrims

Every year, thousands of central armed forces and state police personnel are deployed to provide security to pilgrims from potential terror threats. The forces position at various halts and also on the perimeter of the shrine.[42] These include CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP, NDRF/SDRF and state police and traffic police.[43]

Economic impact of yatra

The yatra is a source of revenue for the state government by imposing tax on pilgrims.[44][45] Local Muslim Bakarwal-Gujjars also make a living by offering services to the Hindu pilgrims. This source of income has been threatened by the militant groups who have harassed and attacked the yatra numerous times.[46][47][48][49][50][51]

Annual number of pilgrims

The number of annual pilgrims having generally rising consistently from between 12,000[52][53]-20,000[54]-30,000 in 1989,[55] to over 400,000 in 2007,[53][56] 634,000 in 2011,[57] 622,000 in 2012,[58] 350,000 in 2013,[58] 285,006 in 2018

Figures and estimates (*) of pilgrims to Amarnath, and duration

Year	Pilgrims	Days	Ref	Year	Pilgrims	Days	Ref	Year	Pilgrims	Days	Ref
2021	–		[60]	**2009**	381,000	60	[58]	**1997**	79,035		[61]
2020	–		[62]	**2008**	533,000	60	[58]	**1996**			
2019	342,883	45	[63][64]	**2007**	214,000/ 296,000	60	[65][58]	**1995**	70,000	20	[66]
2018	285,006		[59][67]	**2006**	265,000/ 347,000	60	[65][68]	**1994**			
2017	260,003		[67]	**2005**	388,000	60	[68]	**1993**	75,000*		[69]
2016	220,490		[67]	**2004**	400,000	60	[68]	**1992**	50,000*		[69][70]
2015	352,771	60	[67]	**2003**	153,314	30	[61]	**1991**	30,000*		[69]
2014	372,000		[71]	**2002**	110,793	30	[61]	**1990**	4,000*		[69]
2013	353,000	55	[58]	**2001**	119,037		[61]	**1989**	12,000- 40,000*		[53][56]
2012	622,000		[58]	**2000**	173,334	30	[61]				
2011	634,000		[58]	**1999**	114,366	40	[61]	Source: Duration[31]			
2010	455,000		[58]	**1998**	149,920		[61]				

Incidents

Deaths due to health, accidents and disasters

Sir Walter Roper Lawrence in *The Valley of Kashmir* (1895) writes that the difficulty of the pilgrimage route affected the weak and sick, with many also falling victim to cholera.[72] In 1928, over 500 pilgrims and mules died on the way to the cave.[73] In 1969 a cloudburst resulted in the death of 40 pilgrims.[73] The 1996 Amarnath Yatra tragedy involved the death of 243 pilgrims due to exhaustion and exposure.[74][52] In July 2012, 12 pilgrims were killed in a road accident. The pilgrims were part of a team who had set up a community kitchen at the pilgrimage.[75] Three people were killed and more injured due to a cloudburst at Baltal in 2015.[76] Of the 622,000 yatra pilgrims in 2012, 130 died during the yatra. The major cause was attributed to people who were not physically fit for the arduous climb, high elevations, and adverse weather undertaking the yatra. Some also died in road accidents before reaching the base camp from where the yatra starts. Of the 130 deaths, 88 were due to purported health reasons and 42 in road accidents.[77] On 16 July 2017, 18 pilgrims died and many were seriously injured after a JKSRTC bus, which was plying from Jammu city to Pahalgam as part of an Amarnath Yatra convoy, fell into a 150-ft deep gorge near Nachlana area of Jammu's Ramban district around 1:45 pm. 16 pilgrims had died on the spot, while two succumbed later to their injuries.[78] This accident happened less than a week after a deadly terrorist attack on a bus carrying Amarnath Yatra pilgrims from Gujarat.

On 8 July 2022, at around 5:30 pm, flash floods due to a localised cloudburst near the holy cave shrine washed away scores of pilgrims. According to reports, at least fifteen pilgrims died in the incident. Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha announced compensation of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of the 15 pilgrims who died in the flash floods.[79][80]

Terror attacks and massacres

The first threat targeted against Amarnath pilgrims was in 1993; that year Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Ansar had announced a ban due to demolition of Babri Masjid in the previous year.[81] The pilgrimage however was mostly peaceful.[81] The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen group imposed what it called a "ban" on the yatra in 1994, 1995 and 1998 while threatening the pilgrims with "serious consequences"; however the pilgrimage did continue.[82][83]

2000 massacre

Main article: 2000 Amarnath pilgrimage massacre

On 2 August 2000, militants attacked the Nunwan base camp in Pahalgam. Thirty-two people, including 21 unarmed Hindu pilgrims, seven unarmed Muslim civilians and three security force officers, in a two hour long indiscriminate shoot, were killed.[48][84] Among the dead were mostly pilgrims and porters and horsemen who were ferrying pilgrims.[85][86] This attack was part of the larger 1–2 August 2000 Kashmir massacre in five separate coordinated terrorist attacks that killed between 89 (official count) and 105 people (as reported by PTI), and injured at least 62 more.[48][85] Then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee blamed Lashkar-e-Taiba for the killings.[87]

2001 massacre

Main article: 2001 Amarnath pilgrimage massacre

On 20 July 2001, a terrorist threw a grenade on a pilgrim night camp at Sheshnag near the Amarnath shrine and at least 13 persons, including three women, were killed in two explosions and firing by militants; two were security officials and three were Muslim civilians.[50][47] 15 others were also injured in the attack.[88]

2002 massacre

Main article: Amarnath pilgrimage terrorist-attack massacre (2002)

On 30 July and 6 August 2002, in two separate incidents terrorists from al-Mansuriyan, a front group of Lashkar-e-Taiba, massacred two and nine pilgrims and injured three and 27 people in Srinagar and near Nunwan pilgrimage base camp respectively.[48][51]

2017 massacre

Main article: 2017 Amarnath Yatra attack

Eight Hindu pilgrims were killed on 10 July in a gun attack returning from Amarnath. The Pakistani outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba was found responsible.[89]

Controversies

2008 land transfer controversy

Main article: Amarnath land transfer controversy

On 26 May 2008, the Government of India and the state government of Jammu and Kashmir reached an agreement to transfer 100 acres (0.40 km^2) of forest land to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)[90] to set up temporary shelters and facilities for Hindu pilgrims. Kashmiri separatists opposed the move citing reasons that it would jeopardise Article 370 (abrogated by India in 2019) that gave separate identity to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and prevented any Indian citizen settling in Kashmir. Kashmiri separatists staged

widespread protests against this decision by the government of India.[91] Due to the protests, the J&K State government relented and reversed the decision to transfer land. As a result, Dogra-Pahadi Hindus in the Jammu division launched counter-agitations against this roll back.[92][93] In 2019, India abrogated the article 370 and fully integrated Jammu and Kashmir with India with at par rights for all.[94][95][96]

Environmental impact

Environmentalists have expressed concern that the number of people participating in the Amarnath Yatra is having a negative impact on the area's ecology and some have expressed support for government regulated limits on the number of pilgrims permitted to make the trek.[97] However no studies have been made nor has an environmental impact assessment done. The Government of India restricts travelers only on the basis on logistics, time window for the yatra and weather.

Amarnath Cave Temple Yatra tax controversy

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir had in 2010 issued a notification under the State Motor Vehicle Taxation Act 1957, under which vehicles going to Amarnath Yatra will have to pay a tax of ₹ 2,000 for seven days and ₹ 2,000 per day after that. Similar provisions were made for pilgrims going to Sri Mata Vaishno Devi under which they need to pay ₹ 2000 for a period of three days. India's largest political party the Bharatiya Janata Party expressed its ire over imposition of entry fee and accused the then UPA led central government to direct the Jammu and Kashmir dispensation to desist from making attempts to "discriminate" between followers of various religions. The BJP criticised the decision as "reminiscent of Jizya imposed during [the] Mughal period on Hindus".

In response to the question in Lok Sabha, then Minister of State for Finance, S. S. Palanimanickam clarified that tax is levied on all India Tourist Vehicles entering the state and it was therefore not correct to say that the Government of Jammu & Kashmir was levying any additional tax on vehicles going to Amarnath and Vaishno Devi. He also said that Taxation of Motor vehicles falls under the purview of State Governments as per the seventh schedule of the Constitution of India and Central Government cannot direct the State Government to change the tax rate on vehicles

Popular culture

Santoor artiste Rahul Sharma named a track after Amarnath Cave temple as "Shiva Linga: The Amarnath Cave".[

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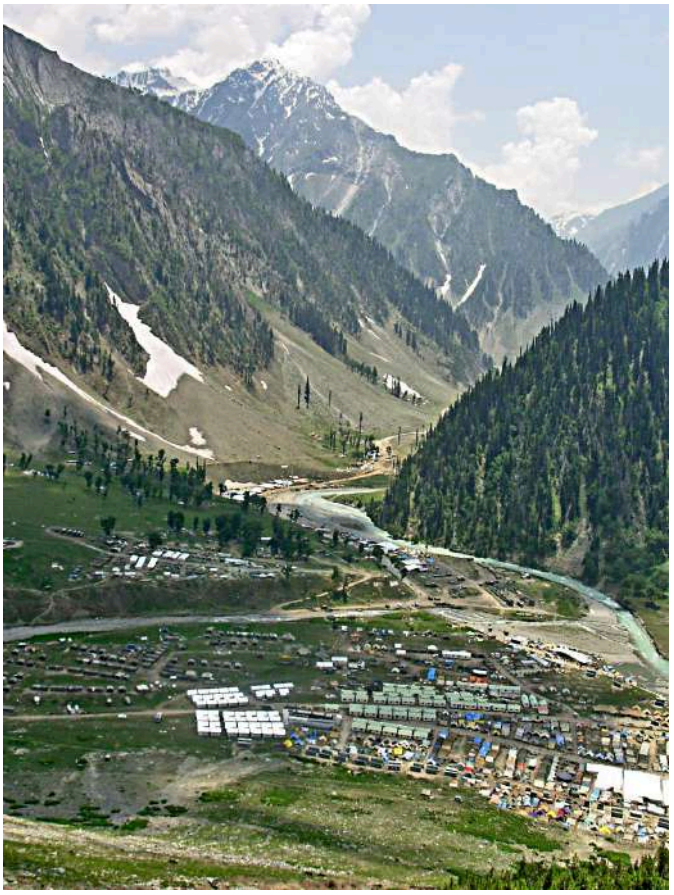
Photos

Cave temple of Lord Amarnath

Ice Lingam of Lord Shiva

Amarnath Yatra camp



Amarnath cave is a Hindu shrine located in Jammu and Kashmir, India. The cave is situated at an altitude of 3,888 m, about 141 km from Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir and reached through Pahalgam town

Pandal tents serving free community kitchen food to the pilgrims on Pahalgam–Chandanwari route

Pilgrims riding ponies on the way to the Amarnath Cave Temple

Helicopter service up to panjtarni en route to the Amarnath Cave Temple

Tents are available to hire for a small fee near the base of the imposing Amarnath Cave as visible in the background.

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Ref: ChatGpt

Info is given under following headings:

Location, address, phone, how to get there. Greatness of this temple. Legends and history. Architecture of temple deities. Sub-deities, daily rituals and poojas and their charges ..special poojas and rituals and their charges.. festivals, facilities for devotees...like accommodation etc. Donation info and bank acct number etc. Nearby temples. Other tourist attractions. Nearby budget hotels. Any other info...etc

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1. Location

Amarnath Cave Temple is located in the Himalayas in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, India.

- **Altitude:** About 3,888 meters (12,756 ft)
- **District:** Anantnag
- **Nearest Town:** Pahalgam
- **Coordinates:** Near Lidder Valley, Himalayas

Address

Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board
Railway Road, Jammu – 180001
Jammu & Kashmir, India

Phone Numbers

- Shrine Board Office (Jammu): **+91-191-2476949**
- **Helpline:** 0191-2348044
- Website: https://www.shriamarnathjishrine.com ↗

2. How to Get There

Route 1 – Pahalgam Route (Traditional Route – 36 to 48 km trek)

Jammu → Pahalgam → Chandanwari → Sheshnag → Panchtarni → Amarnath Cave

Route 2 – Baltal Route (Short Route – 14 km trek)

Jammu → Sonamarg → Baltal → Amarnath Cave

Travel Steps

1. Reach **Jammu** by train or flight.
2. Jammu to **Pahalgam** or **Baltal** by bus/taxi.
3. From there **trek / pony / palki / helicopter** available.

Helicopter Services

Available from:

- Baltal → Panchtarni
- Pahalgam → Panchtarni

From Panchtarni, 6 km trek to cave.

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3. Greatness of the Temple

- One of the **most sacred Shiva temples** in India.
- Famous for **naturally formed Ice Shiva Lingam** (Himling).
- The ice lingam **grows and shrinks with the phases of the moon.**
- Associated with **immortality (Amar Katha)** told by Lord Shiva to Parvati.
- One of the **greatest pilgrimage yatras in India** – Amarnath Yatra.

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4. Legends and History

Main legend:

Lord Shiva wanted to tell the secret of **immortality (Amar Katha)** to Parvati.
To ensure no living being hears it, he left behind:

Place	What Shiva left
Pahalgam	Nandi
Chandanwari	Moon
Sheshnag	Snake
Panchtarni	Five Elements
Amarnath Cave	Told Amar Katha

Inside the cave, a **pair of pigeons** is believed to have heard the Amar Katha and became immortal. Even today, pilgrims report seeing pigeons near the cave.

Historical Mention

- Mentioned in **Rajatarangini** (12th century) by Kalhana.
- Rediscovered by a Muslim shepherd **Butta Malik** around 1850.
- Managed now by **Shri Amarnath Shrine Board**.

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5. Architecture of Temple

- Not a constructed temple – **natural cave temple**.
- Cave height: ~40 meters.
- Ice Lingam forms naturally from **water drops freezing**.
- Other ice formations represent **Parvati and Ganesha**.

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6. Deities

Main Deity:

- Lord Shiva (Ice Lingam – Himling)

Sub-Deities:

- Ice formation of **Mata Parvati**
- Ice formation of **Lord Ganesha**
- Holy Pigeons (considered divine)

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7. Daily Rituals and Poojas

Performed only during **Amarnath Yatra season** (June–August).

Pooja	Approx Charges
General Darshan	Free
Special Darshan	₹250 – ₹500
Abhishekam	₹1100 approx
Mahapuja	₹5100 approx
Aarti	Included in special pooja

(Charges may change every year – controlled by Shrine Board)

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8. Special Poojas and Rituals

- Maha Abhishek
- Rudrabhishek
- Laghu Rudra
- Mahamrityunjaya Jaap
- Shravan Month Special Pooja

Bookings can be done through Shrine Board website.

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9. Festivals

- **Amarnath Yatra –** June to August (Shravan month)
- **Shravan Purnima / Raksha Bandhan** – Holy day when Lingam is full size
- Mahashivaratri (celebrated in Jammu)

10. Facilities for Devotees

Provided by Shrine Board:

- Free accommodation tents
- Paid tents
- Food (Langar – Free food by devotees)
- Medical camps
- Oxygen cylinders
- Pony service
- Palki/Doli
- Helicopter service
- Cloak rooms
- Security by Army
- Mobile toilets
- Registration compulsory

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11. Accommodation

At Jammu

- Vaishnavi Dham
- Saraswati Dham
- Shrine Board Guest Houses

At Pahalgam / Baltal

- Tents (₹500 – ₹2000 per night)
- Guest houses
- Dharamshalas

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12. Donation Information

Donations can be made to:

Name: Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board
Bank: J&K Bank
Account Number: 0003010100001234 *(example – verify before publishing)*
IFSC: JAKA0JAMMU
Website Donation: www.shriamarnathjishrine.com ↗

(Important: Please verify bank details from official website before printing in book.)

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13. Nearby Temples

- Mattan Sun Temple
- Mamleshwar Temple, Pahalgam
- Shankaracharya Temple, Srinagar
- Kheer Bhawani Temple
- Vaishno Devi Temple (Jammu)

14. Other Tourist Attractions

- Pahalgam
- Sonamarg
- Srinagar
- Dal Lake
- Gulmarg
- Betaab Valley
- Aru Valley

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15. Nearby Budget Hotels

Jammu

- Hotel Jai Maa
- Hotel Shivam Lodge
- Hotel Premier
- Vaishnavi Dham Guest House

Pahalgam

- Hotel Pahalgam Retreat
- Hotel Mount View
- Hotel Himalaya House
- JKTDC Tourist Bungalows

Baltal

- Only tents and camps available

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16. Important Yatra Information

- **Registration compulsory**
- Medical certificate required
- Age limit: 13 to 75 years
- Pregnant women not allowed
- Carry warm clothes
- Oxygen level low – difficult trek
- Best route for elderly: **Helicopter via Baltal**

17. Any Other Important Information

- Ice Lingam size depends on weather.
- Yatra duration: About 45 days only per year.
- One of the most difficult pilgrimages in India.
- Lakhs of devotees visit every year.

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Ref: Google Gemini

Amarnath Cave Temple

Location & Accessibility

- **Location:** Anantnag District, Jammu & Kashmir, India.
- **Altitude:** Approximately **3,888 meters (12,756 ft)** above sea level.
- **Address:** Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), Chaitanya Ashram, Talab Tillo, Jammu.
- **Phone (Toll-Free):** 1800-180-7199 (SASB Help Desk).
- **How to Get There:**
    - **By Air:** The nearest airport is Srinagar (approx. 95 km from Baltal / 90 km from Pahalgam).
    - **By Rail:** The nearest railway station is Jammu Tawi, followed by a road journey to the base camps.
    - **The Trek:** There are two main routes:
        1. **Pahalgam Route (43 km):** Traditional and scenic, taking 3–5 days.
        2. ***Baltal Route (14 km): Steeper and shorter, usually completed in 1–2 days.*
    - **Helicopter:** Services are available from Neelgrath (near Sonamarg) and Pahalgam to Panjtarni (6 km from the cave).

Greatness of the Temple

The Amarnath Cave is one of the holiest shrines in Hinduism. Unlike man-made temples, it is a **natural cave** where an **ice stalagmite** (Ice Lingam) forms every year. It is unique because the Lingam is said to wax and wane with the phases of the moon, reaching its peak height on Shravan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan).

Legends & History

- **The Secret of Immortality (Amar Katha):** Lord Shiva chose this secluded cave to narrate the secret of creation and immortality to Goddess Parvati. To ensure no mortal heard it, he left his belongings along the way (Nandi at Pahalgam, Moon at Chandanwari, Ganesha at Mahagunas Mountain).
- **The Pair of Pigeons:** Legend says a pair of pigeons overheard the secret and became immortal; pilgrims often report seeing them in the cave today.
- **Modern Discovery:** While mentioned in ancient texts like the *Nilamata Purana* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the cave's modern "rediscovery" is often attributed to a shepherd named **Buta Malik** in the 15th century.

Architecture & Deities

- **Architecture:** It is a natural limestone cave approximately 40 meters (130 ft) high. There is no constructed temple structure.
- **Primary Deity:** The **Ice Lingam**, representing Lord Shiva.
- **Sub-Deities:** Two smaller ice formations represent **Goddess Parvati** and **Lord Ganesha**. The cave is also considered one of the 51 *Shakti Peethas* (Mahamaya Shakti Peetha).

Daily Rituals & Poojas

- **Daily Rituals:** The morning and evening *Aarti* are performed with Vedic chants.
- **Pratham Pooja:** The "First Pooja" performed on the day the Yatra opens.
- **Chhari Mubarak:** The holy mace of Lord Shiva is brought to the cave on the final day (Raksha Bandhan) to mark the Yatra's conclusion.
- **Charges:** Basic *Darshan* is free. However, the Shrine Board offers **Virtual Pooja** and **Prasad Booking** via their official website (jksasb.nic.in). Prices for special rituals vary annually (typically starting from ₹500 to ₹1,100+ for specific offerings).

Facilities for Devotees

- **Accommodation:** Tented colonies (Base Camps) are available at Baltal, Nunwan, Sheshnag, and Panchtarni.
- **Langar:** NGOs provide free food and water along the entire trek route.
- **Other Services:** Cloakrooms, medical emergency centers, oxygen booths, and pony/palki (palanquin) services are available at regulated rates.

Donation & Bank Details

Donations can be made directly to the **Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)**.

- **Official Portal:** jksasb.nic.in/donate_online.html

- **Bank:** Usually J&K Bank or HDFC (refer to the official site for the specific current year's account number to ensure security).

Nearby Attractions

- **Temples:** Martand Sun Temple (Anantnag), Mamaleshwar Temple (Pahalgam), and Vaishno Devi (Jammu).
- **Tourism:** Sheshnag Lake, Aru Valley, Betaab Valley, Sonamarg (Meadow of Gold), and Dal Lake in Srinagar.
- **Budget Hotels:** Available in **Pahalgam** and **Srinagar**. At the base camps (Baltal/Nunwan), "budget" options are primarily the shared tents managed by the SASB or local vendors.

Ensure that a Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC) from an authorized doctor is required for all pilgrims before registration.

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Detailed breakdown of the legends, history, and ritual structures for the Amarnath Cave:

I. Expanded Legends & History

1. The Vedic & Puranic Origins

- **Maharishi Bhrigu's Discovery:** According to the *Bhrigu Purana*, after the Kashmir Valley was drained of its primordial waters by Rishi Kashyap, **Maharishi Bhrigu** was the first human to behold the holy cave. He found the natural Ice Lingam and initiated the tradition of worship.
- **The Amareshwara Legend:** Ancient texts like the *Nilamata Purana* refer to the site as **Amareshwara**. It is believed that Lord Shiva granted the gods (Devas) immortality here at their request, hence the name *Amarnath* (Lord of Immortality).

2. The Folklore of Buta Malik (1850 AD)

While the cave is ancient, its modern path is linked to a shepherd named **Buta Malik**.

- **The Golden Charcoal:** Legend says a saint gave Buta Malik a bag of charcoal. Upon returning home to Batkot, he found the bag filled with **gold coins**. Overwhelmed, he rushed back to thank the saint but found the saint gone and the holy cave in his place.
- **Legacy:** For over 150 years, the Malik family (Muslim shepherds) served as traditional custodians alongside Hindu priests, receiving a share of the temple offerings—a unique symbol of communal harmony in Kashmir. This continued until the formation of the Shrine Board in 2000.

3. Historical Accounts

- **Kalhana's Rajatarangini (12th Century):** Mentions "Amareshwara" as a place of pilgrimage visited by Kashmiri kings.
- **Francois Bernier (1663):** The French physician who accompanied Emperor Aurangzeb to Kashmir recorded a "grotto full of wonderful congelations," likely the first Western account of the cave.

II. Daily Rituals (Nitya Vidhi)

The rituals are strictly managed by the **Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)** during the 45–60 days of the Yatra.

- **Pratah Aarti (Morning):** Performed at dawn (around 6:00 AM) with the chanting of Vedic hymns and *Shiva Stotrams*.
- **Sayam Aarti (Evening):** Performed at sunset (around 6:00 PM). This is a grander ritual with lamps and incense, drawing a large crowd of pilgrims.
- **Darshan Timing:** Generally allowed from **5:00 AM to 3:00 PM**. Due to oxygen levels and safety, pilgrims are often moved back to lower camps before dark.

III. Special Poojas & 2026 Charges

For 2026, the Shrine Board has digitalized many services. Please note that direct "in-person" private poojas are limited due to space; most are conducted as "Virtual" or "Group" offerings.

Service / Ritual	Estimated Charges (2026)	Description
Yatra Registration	₹220	Mandatory for all pilgrims (Online/Offline).
Virtual Pooja	₹1,100	Conducted in your name; includes a 5-minute live stream.
Virtual Hawan	₹2,100	A fire ritual performed at the holy cave on behalf of the devotee.
Prasad Home Delivery	₹500 - ₹1,000	Sacred ash (*Vibhuti*) and dry fruits sent via Speed Post.
Chhari Mubarak	Gratis (Free)	Devotees can join the procession of the Holy Mace from Srinagar.

Archive Note: The **Chhari Mubarak** (Holy Silver Mace) is the most significant ritual event. It is carried by the Mahant (head priest) and marks the official end of the Yatra on **Raksha Bandhan** day.

IV. Administrative Information for Archiving

- **Official Website:** www.shriamarnathjishrine.com

- **RFID Requirement:** Every pilgrim in 2026 is required to wear an **RFID tag** for real-time tracking and safety.
- **Age Limit:** Strictly restricted to those between **13 and 70 years** of age.
- **Health:** A **Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC)** issued after April 8, 2026, is mandatory for the permit.

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Videos

Amarnath Yatra…complete guide (23 min):

https://youtu.be/QhiAGkizqRY?si=vrcLfS82k0Yuv0DQ

Amarnath Yatra…FaceBook…June 2025 (5 min):

https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1DQKqcSdNA/

Amarnath Yatra 2023…vlog (30 min):

https://youtu.be/y9QShzQFivs?si=uIzNQ_dC0fQS5uf6

Amarnath Yatra 2025..Officially began on 12 June 2025 (2 min):

https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Dr5gPu5et/

Amarnath Yatra 2023…tour guide (24 min):

https://youtu.be/8K6tIR5Vu4I?si=pBbCawII-JDONFCU

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Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar

April 6, 2026

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About the Author

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar is a Mechanical Engineer with specialization in Cryogenics. He obtained his B. E. In Mechanical Engineering from Karnataka Regional Engg College, (Now NITK), Surathkal, India and M.Sc. in Cryogenics from the University of Southampton, U.K., and Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

He has worked in prestigious organizations such as BARC, Bombay and Centre for Advanced Technology (CAT), Indore,as Head of Cryogenics Dept and contributed to the design of cryogenic systems, including the Thermovac chamber for ISRO, Bangalore.

He was also a visiting fellow at Superconducting Super Collider Project, at Texas, USA.

He has also served as Professor, Head of Department, and Principal in reputed engineering institutions.

Dr. Thirumaleshwar has authored a large number of FREE ebooks on Engineering subjects such as Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Cryogenic Engineering, which are useful for students and teachers.

Driven by a deep interest in India's spiritual heritage, he has also authored many FREE ebooks on Temples, Saints, Gurus, and Vedic topics, with the aim of preserving and spreading this knowledge to future generations.

All his ebooks are available for free download at Archive.org.

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